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THE WILD SHEEP OF THE SIERRA.

THE wild sheep ranks highest among the animal mountaineers of the Sierra. Possessed of keen sight and scent, immovable nerve, and strong limbs, he dwells secure amid the loftiest summits of the Alps, from one extremity of the range to the other; leaping unscathed from crag to crag, up and down the fronts of giddy precipices, crossing foaming torrents and slopes of frozen snow, exposed to the wildest storms, yet maintaining a brave, warm life, and developing from generation to generation in perfect strength and beauty.

Nearly all the lofty mountain chains of the globe are inhabited by wild sheep, which, by the best naturalists, are classified under five distinct species. These are the argali (*Ovis ammon*, Linn.), found throughout all the principal ranges of Asia; the burrhal (*Ovis burrhel*) of the upper Himalayas; the Corsican moufflon (*Ovis musimon*, Pal.); the African wild sheep (*Ovis tragelephus*, Cuv.); and the American big horn, or Rocky Mountain sheep (*Ovis montana*, Cuv.) To this last-named species belongs the wild sheep of the Sierra Nevada. Its range, according to Professor Baird, of the Smithsonian Institution, extends "from the region of the upper Missouri and Yellowstone, to the Rocky Mountains and the high grounds adjacent to them on the eastern slope, and as far south as the Rio Grande. Westward it extends to the coast ranges of Washington Territory, Oregon, and California, and follows the highlands some distance into Mexico."* Throughout the vast region bounded on the east and west by the Wasatch Mountains and the Sierra, there are more than a hundred independent ranges and mountain groups, trending north and south in close succession, range beyond range, with summits rising from eight to twelve thousand feet above the level of the sea, every one of which, according to my own observations, is, or has been, inhabited by this species.

Compared with the argali, which, considering its size and the vast extent of its range, is probably the most important of all the wild sheep, our species is, perhaps, a little larger, and the horns are more regularly curved, and less divergent. The more important characteristics are, however, essentially the same, some of the best naturalists maintaining that the two are only varied forms of one species. In accordance with this view, Cuvier conjectures that the argali may have been distributed over this continent from Asia by crossing Behring Straits on ice.

On account of the extreme variability of the sheep under culture, it is generally supposed that the innumerable domestic breeds have all been derived from the few wild species; but the whole question is involved in obscurity. According to Darwin, sheep have been domesticated from a very ancient period, the remains of a small breed, differing from any now known, having been found in the famous Swiss lake dwellings.

Compared with the best-known domestic breeds, we find that our wild species is more than twice as large; and, instead of an all-wool garment, the wild wears a thick overcoat of hair like that of the deer, and an under-covering of fine wool. The hair, though rather coarse, is comfortably soft and spongy, and lies smooth, as if carefully tended with comb and brush. The predominant color during most of the year is brownish-gray, varying to bluish-gray in the autumn; the belly and a large, conspicuous patch on the buttocks are white; and the tail, which is very short, like that of a deer, is black, with a yellowish border.

* Pacific Railroad Survey, Vol. viii., page 678.

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The wool is always white, and grows in beautiful spirals down out of sight among the straight, shining hair, like delicate climbing vines among stalks of corn.

The horns of the male are of immense size, measuring in their greater diameter from five to six and a half inches, and from two and a half to three feet in length around the curve. They are yellowish-white in color, and ridged transversely, like those of the domestic ram. Their cross-section near the base is somewhat triangular in outline, and flattened over toward the tip. In rising from the head, they curve gently backward and outward, then forward and outward, until about three-fourths of a circle is described, and until the flattened, blunt tips are about two feet apart. Those of the female are flattened throughout their entire length, less curved than those of the male, and much smaller, measuring less than a foot along the curve.

A ram and ewe that I obtained near the Modoc lava-beds, to the north-east of Mount Shasta, measured as follows:

	Ram. ft.	Ram. in.	Ewe. ft.	Ewe. in.
Height at shoulders	3	6	3	0
Girth around shoulders	3	11	3	3¾
Length from nose to root of tail	5	10¼	4	3½
Length of ears	0	4¾	0	5
Length of tail	0	4½	0	4½
Length of horns around curve	2	9	0	11½
Distance across from tip to tip of horns	2	5½		
Circumference of horns at base	1	4	0	6

The measurements of a male obtained in the Rocky Mountains by Audubon vary but little as compared with the above.

SNOW-BOUND ON MOUNT SHASTA.

The weight of his specimen was three hundred and forty-four pounds,* which is, perhaps, about an average for full-grown males. The females are about a third lighter.

Besides these differences in size, color, clothing, etc., as noted above, we may observe that the domestic sheep, in a general way, is expressionless, like a dull bundle

* Audubon and Bachman's "Quadrupeds of North America."

of something only half alive, while the wild is as elegant and graceful as a deer, and every movement tells the strength and grandeur of his character. The tame is timid; the wild is bold. The tame is always more or less ruffled and dirty; while the wild is as smooth and clean as the flowers of his mountain pastures.

The earliest mention that I have been able to find of the wild sheep in America is by Father Picolo, a Catholic missionary at Monterey, in the year 1797, who, after describing it, oddly enough, as "a kind of deer with a sheep-like head, and about as large as a calf one or two years old," naturally hurries on to remark: "I have eaten of these beasts; their flesh is very tender and delicious." Mackenzie, in his northern travels, heard the species spoken of by the Indians as "white buffaloes." And Lewis and Clark tell us that, in a time of great scarcity on the head-waters of the Missouri, they saw plenty of wild sheep, but they were "too shy to be shot."

A few of the more energetic of the Pah Ute Indians hunt the wild sheep every season among the more accessible of the California Alps, in the neighborhood of passes, where, from having been pursued, they have at length become extremely wary; but in the rugged wilderness of peaks and cañons, where the foaming tributaries of the San Joaquin and King's rivers take their rise, they fear no hunter save the wolf, and are more guileless and approachable than their tame kindred.

I have been greatly interested in studying their habits during the last ten years, while engaged in the work of exploring those high regions where they delight to roam. In the months of November and December, and probably during a considerable portion of midwinter, they all flock together, male and female, old and young. I once found a complete band of this kind numbering upward of fifty, which, on being alarmed, went bounding away across a jagged lava-bed at admirable speed, led by a majestic old ram, with the lambs safe in the middle of the flock.

In spring and summer, the full-grown rams form separate bands of from three to twenty, and are usually found feeding along the edges of glacier meadows, or resting among the castle-like crags of the high summits; and whether quietly feeding, or scaling the wild cliffs for pleasure, their noble forms, and the power and beauty of their movements, never fail to strike the beholder with lively admiration.

Their resting-place seems to be chosen with reference to sunshine and a wide outlook, and most of all to safety from the attacks of wolves. Their feeding-grounds are among the most beautiful of the wild gardens, bright with daisies, and gentians, and mats of purple bryanthus, lying hidden away on rocky headlands and cañon sides, where sunshine is abundant, or down in shady glacier valleys, along the banks of the streams and lakes, where the plushy sod is greenest. Here they feast all summer, the happy wanderers, perhaps relishing the beauty as well as the taste of the lovely flora on which they feed, however slow tame men may be to guess their capacity beyond grass.

When winter storms set in, loading their highland pastures with snow, then, like the birds, they gather and go to warmer climates, usually descending the eastern flank of the range to the rough, volcanic table-lands and treeless ranges of the Great Basin adjacent to the Sierra. They never make haste, however, and seem to have no dread of storms, many of the strongest only going down leisurely to bare, wind-swept ridges, to feed on bushes and dry bunch-grass, and then returning up into the snow. Once I was snow-bound on Mount Shasta for three days, a little below the timber-line. It was a dark and stormy time, well calculated to test the skill and endurance of mountaineers. The snow-laden gale drove on night and day in hissing, blinding floods, and when at length it began to abate, I found that a small band of wild sheep had weathered the storm in the lee of a clump of dwarf pines a few yards above my storm-nest, where the snow was eight or ten feet deep. I was warm back of a rock, with blankets, bread, and fire. My brave companions lay in the snow, without food, and with only the partial shelter of the short trees, yet made no sign of suffering or faint-heartedness.

In the months of May and June, they bring forth their young, in the most solitary and inaccessible crags, far above the nesting-rocks of the eagle. I have frequently come upon the beds of the ewes and lambs at an elevation of from twelve to thirteen thousand feet above sea-level. These beds are simply oval-shaped hollows, pawed out among loose, disintegrating rock-chips and sand, upon some sunny spot commanding a good outlook, and partially sheltered from the winds that sweep those lofty peaks almost without intermission. Such is the cradle of the little mountaineer, aloft in the

very sky; rocked in storms, curtained in clouds, sleeping in thin, icy air; but, wrapped in his hairy coat, and nourished by a strong, warm mother, defended from the talons of the eagle and teeth of the sly coyote, the bonnie lamb grows apace. He soon learns to nibble the tufted rock-grasses and leaves of the white spiræa; his horns begin to shoot, and before summer is done he is strong and agile, and goes forth with the flock, watched by the same divine love that tends the more helpless human lamb in its warm cradle by the fireside.

Nothing is more commonly remarked by noisy, dusty trail-travelers in the high Sierra than the want of animal life—no birds, no deer, no squirrels. But if such could only go away quietly into the wilderness, sauntering afoot with natural deliberation, they would soon learn that these mountain mansions are not without inhabitants, many of whom, confiding and gentle, would not try to shun their acquaintance.

In the fall of 1873 I was tracing the South Fork of the San Joaquin up its wild cañon to its farthest glacier fountains. It was the season of Alpine Indian summer. The sun beamed lovingly; the squirrels were nutting in the pine-trees, butterflies hovered about the last of the golden-rods, willow and maple thickets were yellow, the meadows were brown, and the whole sunny, mellow landscape glowed like a countenance with the deepest and sweetest repose. On my way over the shining, glacier-polished rocks along the foaming river, I came to an expanded portion of the cañon, about two miles long and half a mile wide, inclosed with picturesque granite walls, like those of Yosemite Valley, the river pouring its crystal floods through garden, meadow, and grove in many a sun-spangled curve.

This hidden Yosemite was full of wild life. Deer, with their supple, well-grown fawns, bounded from thicket to thicket as I advanced. Grouse kept rising from the

HEAD OF THE MERINO RAM (DOMESTIC).

HEAD OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILD SHEEP.

brown grass with a great whirring of wings, and, alighting on low branches of pine or poplar, allowed a near approach, as if pleased to be observed. Farther on, a broad-shouldered wild-cat showed himself, coming out of a grove, and crossing the river on a flood-jamb of logs, halting for a moment to look back. The bird-like tamias frisked about my feet everywhere among the pine-needles and seedy grass-tufts. Cranes waded the shallows of the river-bends, the kingfisher rattled from perch to perch, and the blessed ouzel sang amid the spray of every cascade. Where may lonely wanderer find a more beautiful family of mountain-dwellers, earth-born companions, and fellow-mortals? It was afternoon when I joined them, and the glorious landscape faded in the gloaming before I awoke from their enchantment. Then I sought a camp-ground on the river-bank, made a cup-ful of tea, and lay down to sleep on a smooth place among the yellow leaves of an aspen grove. Next day I discovered yet grander landscapes and grander life. Following the curves of the river, over huge, swelling rock-bosses, and past innumerable cascades, the scenery in general became gradually more Alpine. The sugar-pine and silver-fir gave place to the hardier cedar and Williamson spruce. The cañon walls became more rugged and bare, and gentians and Arctic daisies became more abundant in the gardens and strips of meadow along the streams. Toward the middle of the afternoon I came to another valley, strikingly wild and original in all its features, and perhaps never before touched by human foot. As regards area of level bottom-land, it is one of the very smallest

of the San Joaquin Yosemites, but its walls are sublime in height, rising at a bound into the thin sky two to four thousand feet above the river. At the head of the valley the main cañon forks, as is found to be the case in all Yosemites. The formation of this one is due to the action of two vast ice-rivers, whose fountains lay to the eastward, on the flanks of Mounts Humphrey and Emerson, and a cluster of nameless peaks farther south. On the slow recession of those rock-grinding glaciers, at the close of the Glacial Period, this valley basin came to light: first a lake, then a sedgy meadow, then, after being filled in with flood and avalanche bowlders, and planted with trees and grasses, it became the Yosemite of to-day—a range for wild sheep and wild men.

The gray bowlder-chafed river was singing loudly through the valley, but above its massy roar I heard the deep booming of a water-fall, which drew me eagerly on. Emerging from the tangled avalanche of groves and briers at the head of the valley, there in full view appeared the young San Joaquin fresh from its glacier fountains, falling white and free in a glorious cascade, between granite walls two thousand feet high. The steep incline down which the glad waters thundered seemed to bar all farther progress. It was not long, however, before I discoved a crooked seam in the rock, by which I was enabled to climb to the edge of a terrace that crosses the cañon, and divides the cataract nearly in the middle. Here I sat down to take breath and make some entries in my notebook, taking advantage, at the same time, of my elevated position above the trees to gaze back over the valley into the heart of the noble landscape, little knowing the while what neighbors were near.

After spending a few irregular minutes in this way, I chanced to look across the fall, and there stood three sheep quietly observing me. Never did the sudden appearance of a mountain, or water-fall, or human friend, so forcibly seize and rivet my attention. Anxiety to observe accurately on so rare an occasion checked boisterous enthusiasm. Eagerly I marked the flowing undulations of their firm, braided muscles, their strong legs, ears, eyes, heads, their graceful, rounded necks, the color of their hair, and the bold, upsweeping, cycloidal curve of their noble horns. When they moved I devoured every gesture, while they, in nowise disconcerted either by my attention or by the tumultuous roar of the falling water, advanced deliberately alongside the rapids between the two divisions of the cataract, turning now and then to look at me. Presently they came to a steep, ice-burnished acclivity, which they ascended by a quick succession of short, stiff-legged leaps, reaching the top without a struggle. This was the most startling feat of mountaineering I had ever witnessed, and, considering only the mechanics of the thing, one's astonishment could hardly have been greater had they displayed wings and taken to flight. "Sure-footed mules" on such ground would have fallen and rolled like loosened bowlders. Many a time, where the slopes were far lower, I have been compelled to take off my shoes and stockings, tie them to my belt, and creep barefoot with the utmost caution. No wonder then that I watched the progress of these animal mountaineers with keen sympathy, and exulted in the boundless sufficiency of wild nature displayed in their invention, construction, and keeping. But judge the measure of my good fortune when, a few minutes later, I caught sight of a dozen more in one band, near the foot of the upper fall. They were standing on the same side of the river with me, distant only twenty-five or thirty yards, and looking as unworn and perfect as if created on the spot. It appeared by their tracks, which I had seen on the meadow, and by their present position, that when I came up the cañon they were all feeding together down in the valley, and in their haste to reach high ground, where they could look about them to ascertain the nature of the strange disturbance, they were divided, three ascending on one side the river, the rest on the other. The main band, headed by an experienced chief, now began to cross the rapids. This was another exciting feat; for, among all the varied experiences of mountaineers, the crossing of boisterous, rock-dashed torrents is found to be the most trying to the nerves. Yet these fine, brave fellows walked fearlessly to the brink, and jumped from bowlder to bowlder, holding themselves in perfect poise above the whirling, confusing current, as if they were doing nothing extraordinary.

The immediate foreground of this rare picture was glossy, ice-burnished granite, traversed by a few bold lines in which grew rock-ferns and tufts of healthy bryanthus, with the gray cañon walls on the sides, nobly sculptured and adorned with brown cedars and pines. In the distance were lofty peaks dipping into the azure, and in the mid-

dle-ground was the snowy fall, the voice and soul of the landscape; fringing bushes beating time to its thunder-tones, the brave sheep in front of it; their gray forms slightly obscured in the spray, yet standing out in good heavy relief against the close white water,—their huge horns rising and curving in the midst like the upturned roots of dead pine-trees, while the evening sunbeams streaming up the cañon gilded and glorified all. After crossing the river, the dauntless climbers, led on by their chief, at once began to scale the cañon wall, turning now right, now left, in long, single file, keeping well apart out of one another's way, and leaping in regular succession from crag to crag, now ascending slippery dome-curves, now walking leisurely along the edges of precipices, stopping, at times, to gaze down at me from some flat-topped rock, with heads held aslant, as if curious to learn what I thought about it, or whether I was likely to follow them. After reaching the top of the wall, which, at this place, is somewhere between one thousand five hundred, and two thousand feet high, they were still visible against the sky as they lingered, looking down in groups of two or three, giving rare animation to the wilderness. .

Throughout the entire ascent they did not make a single awkward step, or an unsuccessful effort of any kind. I have frequently seen tame sheep in mountains jump upon a sloping rock-surface, hold on tremulously a few seconds, and fall back baffled and irresolute. But in the most trying situations, where the slightest want or inaccuracy would have resulted in destruction, these always seemed to move in comfortable reliance on their strength and skill, the limits of which they never appeared to know. Moreover, each one of the flock, while following the guidance of the most experienced, yet climbed with intelligent independence as a perfect individual, capable of separate existence whenever it should wish or be compelled to withdraw from the little clan. The domestic sheep, on the contrary, is only a fraction of an animal, a whole flock being required to form an individual, just as numerous florets are required to make one complete sunflower.

Those shepherds who, in summer, drive their flocks to the mountain pastures, and, while watching them night and day, have seen them torn to pieces by bears, disintegrated by storms, and scattered diverse like wind-driven chaff, will, in some measure, be able to appreciate the self-reliance and strength and noble individuality of nature's sheep.

Like the Alp-climbing ibex of Europe, our mountaineer is said to plunge headlong down the faces of sheer precipices and alight on his big horns. I know only two hunters who claim to have actually witnessed this feat. I never was so fortunate. They describe the act as a diving head-foremost. The horns are so large at the base that they cover all the upper portion of the head down nearly to a level with the eyes, and the skull is exceedingly strong. I struck an old, bleached specimen on Mount Ritter a dozen blows with my ice-ax without breaking it. Such skulls would not fracture very readily by the wildest rock-diving, but other bones could hardly be expected to hold together in such a performance; and the mechanical difficulties in the way of controlling their movements, after striking upon an irregular surface, are, in themselves, sufficient to show this bowlder-like method of progression to be impossible, even in the absence of all other evidence on the subject; moreover, the ewes follow wherever the rams may lead, and their horns are mere spikes. I have found many pairs of horns considerably battered—a result, most likely, of fighting, though, when a great leap is made, they may possibly seek to lighten the shock by striking their heads against anything that may chance to be favorably situated for the purpose, just as men mountaineers do with their hands. I have been interested in the question, after witnessing the performances of the San Joaquin band upon the glaciated rocks at the foot of the falls, and as soon as I procured specimens and examined their feet, all the mystery disappeared. The secret, considered in connection with exceptionally strong muscles, is simply this: the wide posterior portion of the bottom of the foot, instead of wearing down and becoming flat and hard, like the feet of tame sheep and horses, bulges out in a soft, rubber-like pad or cushion, which not only grips and holds well on smooth rocks, but fits into small cavities, and down upon or against slight protuberances. Even the hardest portions of the edge of the hoof are comparatively soft and elastic; furthermore, the toes admit of an extraordinary amount of both lateral and vertical motion, allowing the foot to accommodate itself still more perfectly to the irregularities of rock surfaces, and at the same time increasing the gripping power.

CROSSING A CAÑON STREAM.

At the base of Sheep Rock, one of the winter strongholds of the Shasta flocks, there lives a stock-raiser who has the advantage of observing the movements of wild sheep every winter; and, in the course of a conversation with him on the subject of their diving habits, he pointed to the front of a lava headland about a hundred and fifty feet high, which is only eight or ten degrees out of the perpendicular. "There," said he, "I followed a band of them fellows to the back of that rock yonder, and expected to capture them all, for I thought I had a dead thing on them. I got behind them on a narrow bench that runs along the face of the wall near the top, and comes to an end where they couldn't get away without falling and being killed; but they jumped off, and landed all right, as if that were the regular thing with them."

"What!" said I, "jumped a hundred and fifty feet! Did you see them do it?"

"No," he replied, "I didn't see them going down, for I was behind them; but I saw them go off over the brink, and then I went below and found their tracks where they struck on the loose *débris* at the bottom. They *sailed right off*, and landed on their feet right side up. That's the kind of animal *they* is—beats anything else that goes on four legs."

On another occasion, a flock that was pursued by hunters retreated to another portion of this same cliff where it is still higher, and, on being followed, they were seen jumping down in perfect order, one behind another, by two men who happened to be chopping where they had a fair view of them and could watch their progress from top to bottom. Both ewes and rams made the frightful descent without evincing any extraordinary concern, hug-

ging close to the rock and controlling the velocity of their half falling, half leaping movements by striking at short intervals and holding back with their cushioned, rubber feet upon small ledges and roughened inclines until near the bottom, when they "sailed off" into the free air and alighted on their feet, but with their bodies so nearly in a vertical position that they appeared to be diving.

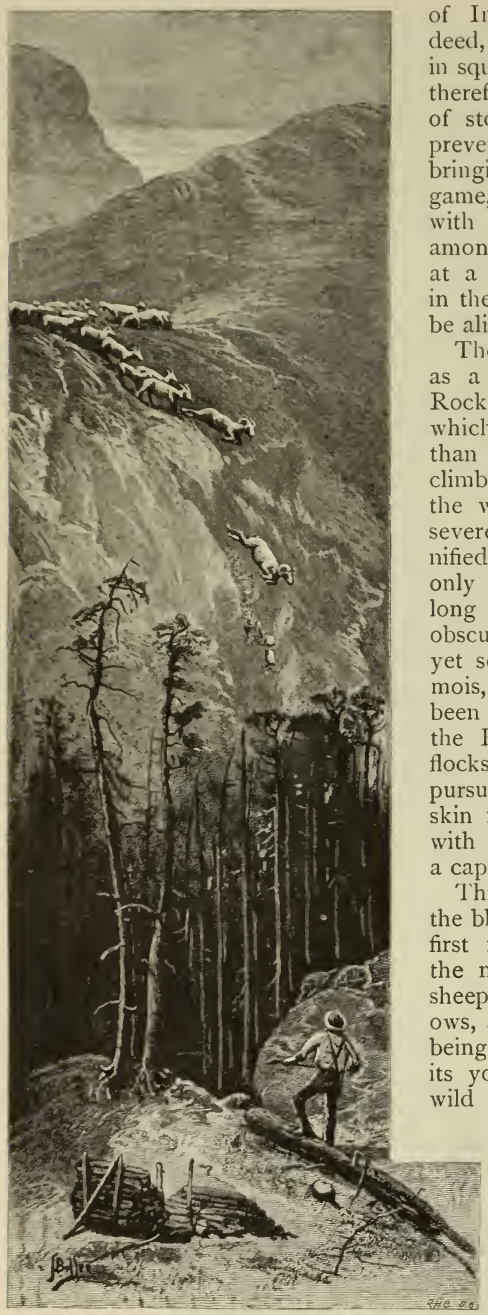
It appears, therefore, that the methods of this wild mountaineering become clearly comprehensible as soon as we make ourselves acquainted with the rocks, and the kind of feet and muscles brought to bear upon them.

The Modoc and Pah Ute Indians are, or, rather, have been, the most successful hunters of the wild sheep. Great numbers of heads and horns belonging to animals killed by them are found accumulated in the caves of the lava-beds and Mount Shasta, and in the upper cañons of the Alps opposite Owens Valley, while the heavy obsidian arrow-heads found on some of the highest peaks show that this warfare has long been going on.

In the more accessible ranges that stretch across the desert regions of western Utah and Nevada, considerable numbers of Indians used to hunt in company like packs of wolves, and being perfectly acquainted with the topography of their hunting-grounds, and with the habits and instincts of the game, they were pretty successful. On the tops of nearly every one of the Nevada mountains that I have visited, I found small, nest-like inclosures built of stones, in which, as I afterward learned, one or more Indians lay in wait while their companions scoured the ridges below, knowing that the alarmed sheep would surely run to the summit, and when they could be made to approach with the wind they were shot at short range.

INDIANS HUNTING WILD SHEEP.

Still larger bands of Indians used to make grand hunts upon some dominant mountain much frequented by the sheep, such as Mount Grant on the Wassuck Range to the west of Walker Lake. On some particular



WILD SHEEP JUMPING OVER A PRECIPICE.

spot, favorably situated with reference to the well-known trails of the sheep, they built a high-walled corral, with long guiding wings, diverging from the gate-way; and into this inclosure they sometimes succeeded in driving the noble game. Great numbers of Indians were of course required, more, indeed, than they could usually muster, counting in squaws, children, and all; they were compelled, therefore, to build rows of dummy hunters out of stones, along the ridge-tops they wished to prevent the sheep from crossing. And, without bringing any discredit upon the sagacity of the game, these dummies are found effective; for, with a few live Indians moving about excitedly among them, they can hardly be distinguished at a little distance from men, by any one not in the secret. The whole ridge-top then seems to be alive with hunters.

The only animal that may fairly be regarded as a companion of our sheep is the so-called Rocky Mountain goat (*Aplocerus montana*, Rich.), which, as its name indicates, is more antelope than goat. He, too, is a brave and hardy climber, fearlessly accompanying the sheep on the wildest summits, and braving with him the severest storms; but smaller, and much less dignified in demeanor. His jet-black horns are only about five or six inches in length, and the long white hair with which he is covered must obscure the expression of his limbs. I have never yet seen a living specimen of this American chamois, although a few bands, it is said, have been found in the Sierra. In some portions of the Rocky and Cascade mountains it occurs in flocks of considerable size, where it is eagerly pursued by the Indians, who make use of its skin in various ways as clothing, that of the head with the horns attached being sometimes worn as a cap.

Three species of deer are found in California—the black-tailed, white-tailed, and mule-deer. The first mentioned *(Cervus Columbianus)* is by far the most abundant, and occasionally meets the sheep during the summer on high glacier meadows, and along the edge of the timber-line; but being a forest animal, seeking shelter and rearing its young in dense thickets, it seldom visits the wild sheep in its higher homes. The antelope, though not a mountaineer, is occasionally met in winter by the sheep while feeding along the edges of the sage-plains and bare volcanic hills to the east of the Sierra. So also is the mule-deer, which is almost restricted in its range to this eastern region. The white-tailed species belongs to the coast-ranges.

Perhaps no wild animal in the world is without enemies, but highlanders, as a class, have fewer than lowlanders. The wily panther, slipping and crouching among long grass and bushes, pounces upon the antelope and deer, but seldom crosses the bald, craggy thresholds of the sheep. Neither can the bears be regarded as enemies;

for, though they seek to vary their every-day diet of nuts and berries by an occasional meal of mutton, they prefer to hunt tame and helpless flocks. Eagles and coyotes, no doubt, capture an unprotected lamb at times, or some unfortunate beset in deep, soft snow, but these cases are little more than accidents. So, also, a few perish in long-continued snow-storms, though, in all my mountaineering, I have not found more than five or six that seemed to have met their fate in this way. A little band of three were discovered snow-bound in Bloody Cañon a few years ago, and were killed with an ax by some travelers who chanced to be crossing the range in winter.

Man, being the most powerful, is the most dangerous enemy of all, but even from him our brave mountain-dweller has little to fear in the remote solitudes of the Alps. The golden plains of the Sacramento and San Joaquin were lately thronged with bands of elk and antelope, but, being fertile and accessible, they were required for human pastures. So also are the magnificent feeding-grounds of the deer—hill, valley, forest, and meadow, but it will be long ere man will care to take the highland castles of the sheep. And when we consider here how rapidly entire species of noble animals, such as the elk, moose, and buffalo, are being pushed to the very verge of extinction, all lovers of wildness will rejoice with me in the rocky security of *Ovis Montana*, the bravest inhabitant of the California Alps.

John Muir.

CALPURNIA.

I.

PRELUDE.

Hot was the noon and heavy. A pitiless, quivering brightness
Hung in the motionless air; and o'er the abodes of the Cæsars
Broke the fierce breath of the sun from the fathomless deeps of the heavens.
Tiber, the ancient, had shrunk in his bed, and, with sluggish pulsations,
Languished his tawny blood in his veins as he crept 'neath the arches,—
Crept 'neath the walls of the city of Mars to the happy Campagna.
Gray was the grass on his banks, and the far-spreading crowns of the palm-trees
Hung with a nerveless droop. Among the rank-growing rushes
Stirred no murmuring breeze; and, hid in the gloom of the ilex,
Moped the voiceless birds. Beneath the arcades of the temples
Brooded the spirit of silence; around the sculptured altars
Drowsed in the wide and tenantless space the heavy-eyed augurs,
Waiting in vain for the worshipers' tread and the prayers of the faithful,
Offering votive gifts on the shrines of the lofty Immortals.
Lo! without, on the Forum the stately façades and the columns,
Lifted their snowy shapes against the deep blue of the ether,
Grave, and placid, and pure, like the thought of a god of Olympus
Swiftly congealed to stone in its large primeval perfection.
Soundless and white was the noon; and, under the resonant arches,
Rose in trembling wavelets the air from the sun-smitten pavements,
And a bright lizard, perchance, that noiselessly slid o'er the marble,
Flashed his golden-brown throat, and a hound slunk by in the shadow,
Sadly, with lolling tongue. Thus, desolate, silent, and weary,
Slept the great city at noon, the city of Mars and the Cæsars.

"AROUND THE SCULPTURED ALTARS
DROWSED IN THE WIDE AND TENANTLESS SPACE THE HEAVY-EYED AUGURS."

II.

IN THE PALACE OF THE CÆSARS.

HIGH on the Palatine Hill, within the cool courts of his palace,
Stretched on the tawny skin of a beast from the African jungles,
Lay Maxentius Cæsar, the scourge of the angry Immortals.
Huge was his frame and seamed with the scars of manifold battles;
Rough-hewn his face and uncouth. A savage, barbarian cunning
Lurked in his keen black eyes 'neath the bulging wall of his forehead,
Furrowed across with a blood-red streak from the rim of the helmet.
Bearded, burly, and fierce, like the men from Teutonian forest: